DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 233 930 SO 014 819

AUTHOR Kuhmerker, Lisa, Ed.
TITLE Social Studies Core Curriculum in Fieldston Lower School.
INSTITUTION City Univ. of New York, N.Y. Hunter Coll.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 47p.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
JOURNAL CIT Moral Education Forum; v8 n2 Sum 1983

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Core Curriculum; Curriculum Development; Elementary Education; *Elementary School Curriculum; *Ethical Instruction; Hidden Curriculum; History Instruction; Integrated Curriculum; *Interdisciplinary Approach; *Moral Development; Moral Values; Science Programs; Socialization; *Social Studies; Units of Study; Values Education
IDENTIFIERS Ethical Culture Schools; *Fieldston Lower School NY; Native Americans; PF Project

ABSTRACT

An overview is presented of an elementary-level social studies core curriculum at Fieldston Lower School (in New York City) in which the moral and ethical development of students is seen as a priority. Fieldston Lower School is one of three branches of the Ethical Culture Schools. Article 1 focuses on the modification of the traditional elementary school curriculum to serve a moral education function. Article 2 discusses the teaching of ethics in the Ethical Culture Schools and focuses on "formal" ethics instruction through both hidden and explicit curriculum. Article 3 focuses on the social studies and natural sciences and presents a rationale for organizing curriculum around a sociomoral core. Article 4 describes daily school situations and how each can be used to support socialization and ego development. Article 5 advocates the inclusion of social studies as the sociomoral core of the science program to best facilitate active problem solving and raise moral issues. Article 6 presents a year-long unit on Woodland Indians as an example of a social studies core for third grade. Suggested activities include planting and harvesting corn, reading Indian literature, wearing Indian clothing, and researching other tribes. Article 7 offers similar themes, projects, and stories valuable in introducing a unit on the Middle Ages to fifth graders. Finally, Article 8 considers ways in which children can become historians through such activities as reading historical fiction; old journals and letters; discussing legends; and interviewing old timers. Also provided are three circular charts presenting sample social studies core units and ideas for incorporating other subject areas into the social studies core. (LH)

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ED233930

Volume 8, Number 2, Summer 1983

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SOCIAL STUDIES CORE CURRICULUM

IN

FIELDSTON LOWER SCHOOL

Moral Education FORUM

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SP 014 819

Hunter College, City University of New York

Moral Education FORUM

ISSN 0163-6480

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MEF is sponsored by Hunter College, CUNY, and is published four times a year at the following subscription rates:

USA: INDIVIDUALS: $15/1 yr; $25/2 yrs.
INSTITUTIONS: $18/1 yr; $30/2 yrs.
Canada: Add $3/yr. for individual and institutional subscriptions
Overseas: Add $3/yr. for surface delivery
Add $10/yr. for airmail delivery

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK
THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM AS MORAL EDUCATOR

The focus of this journal issue is an overview and description of the curriculum, in particular the social studies core curriculum, of a fine elementary school. It is a school with a long-standing commitment to the moral and/or ethical development of its students. It is Fieldston Lower School, one of three branches of the Ethical Culture Schools; and it is a happy circumstance that the publication of this issue of the Forum coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the school.

How does the curriculum of an elementary school where the moral and/or ethical development of its students is "up-front agenda" differ from school settings where this component is absent, pursued sporadically and perhaps a curriculum hidden from faculty and administration? The quest for insight into this question led this editor into site visits and a level of involvement that far exceeded the study and preparation that generally go into the production of MEF issues. I found myself reading a fair proportion of the books that are assigned to students. I found myself interviewing twenty sixth-graders and looking for parallels between the structure of their thinking as revealed in the interview setting versus their responses to written homework assignments and class discussions. The time for sharing this as-yet-undigested data is still far in the future, but the weekly and sometimes bi-weekly visits throughout the school year have given me a sense of the pace as well as the curriculum of the school. The visits also led me to the conclusion that it would be unproductive to describe isolated program bits; and so I encouraged the teachers who were developing articles to describe as concretely as possible what the children do in the course of the school year without attempting to identify which activities might foster such components of moral development as moral reasoning, self-esteem, or perspective-taking. The focus is on middle childhood in the elementary grades because there is relatively little data about this age group in the moral education literature.

At the adolescent and adult levels, the researcher and practitioner in moral education can draw on an extensive body of literature in moral development theory, intervention and evaluation. There are strategies and a rationale for assessing moral reasoning and for viewing the data gathered from observation and interview in terms of its structure. Educational programs at the secondary school level have been experimentally created, evaluated, replicated and vividly described, so that the reader can study and select from a variety of alternatives ranging from short-term interventions stressing hypothetical dilemmas and cognitive dissonance, through the incorporation of dilemma discussion techniques into the study of literature, social studies and science, to the creation of fairness committees, core groups and school-wide meetings designed to create a just community within the school.

At the lower end of the educational ladder, at the early childhood education level, there is a rich body of educational literature that has its roots in the progressive education movement. This literature does not use the language of moral development; but its concern for the dignity of the child, for the fostering of communication skills that can serve in the resolution of conflicts, and the stress on feelings and reasons for behavior, clearly bring it within the realm of moral education. In early childhood education literature, one can also find extensive descriptions of children's behavior in group interaction and with curriculum materials. Reading to young children and guiding their discussion of stories (be they rooted in reality or fantasy) is clearly a significant part of the moral development and education process at the early childhood level, although the link between this activity and cognitive development, empathy and ego development has not been made explicit.

What happends in the elementary school that fosters moral development? Here the data is relatively sparse. There seems to be value to the discussion of hypothetical dilemmas, but how frequent should their use be? Perhaps dilemma discussions might be used systematically twice during the progress through the elementary school and occasionally in between. There have been attempts to introduce children to philosophical thinking, but evaluation of the efficacy of this endeavor is blurred by the lack of distinction between the theory and the curriculum developed for its implementation.

There is literature on the fostering of critical thinking, but the link to critical thinking in the social sphere and to moral behavior has not been demonstrated. There is some literature on the development of reasoning about rules in the school and the need for laws in society and -- at least by implication -- a link has been made between those considerations and the establishment of a democratic classroom. Last but not least, there is good evidence for the impact of peer relations on moral reasoning and behavior, but little discussion about what role, if any, the school can or should play in the constructive channeling of peer interaction at the elementary school level.

Viewed from the perspective of thirty hours of school per week, for forty weeks, for seven or eight years, that part of the school life that has an identified moral dimension or has been claimed for an activity designed to foster moral development is sparse indeed! Granted that there is a "hidden curriculum" embedded in the moral atmosphere of the school, what about the up-front curriculum of the elementary school? In a "good" school, however we may agree to define that, can the general curriculum of such an elementary school serve a moral education function? What constitutes the social education core of the curriculum as viewed separately from the network of social interaction in the school? What materials and activities can be broadly viewed as part of a moral education curriculum?

I found that the teachers at Fieldston Lower School made good use of materials and strategies that can be found in many classrooms. Traditional, but not to be overlooked, are textbooks developed for school use. Through the selection and simplified presentation of information, textbooks give

students access to facts and symbols that social conventions assume as common background for members of a culture.

Photographs, slides, films, audio-tapes and video-tapes expand, for twentieth-century students, the range of information from which they can make inferences about the life of other people and other times. All schools see these multi-media materials as valuable resources. They provide content for the cognitive goals of the program and the potential for the drawing of inferences and value judgments.

School trips and interviews with selected adults are other traditional forms of enrichment, although time and money constraints make them relatively rare experiences in the school lives of most children; and teachers often fail to exploit the potential of these activities through insufficient class planning and follow-up discussion. Yet such "three-dimensional activities" may have values that are not commonly stressed. The very "liveness" of the activity makes it possible for student learnings to go beyond that envisioned in the teachers' plans. Possibly even more significantly, experience with persons and objects from the relatively recent past can provide an antidote to the stereotyping that inevitably creeps into all secondary source material. Talking with old persons, for example, not only provides a link to the not-so-distant past, it makes students realize that the individuals they are meeting have a vigor and variety that their reading about old people may not have led them to expect. Finding some "living history" richer and more varied than texts and other documentation, can create a more open mind vis-a-vis historical sources that are beyond direct experience and verification.

Space restrictions preclude all but incidental reference to these traditional teaching materials and strategies. Rather, the focus in the articles that follow is on curricular activities at Fieldston Lower School that differ from those of many other schools.

Grades three, four, five and six each extend a single social studies theme over a whole year. This makes it possible to study a topic in depth through varied reading, particularly of historical fiction. Arts and crafts programs are related to the Unit theme and carried out leisurely over a period of many weeks. Children can "learn" and regurgitate only a limited amount of information a day. What do they do the rest of the time? In many schools, they spend their time waiting for other children to get "ready" to ingest another chunk of information. At Fieldston Lower School, they are likely to be making something that deepens their understanding of the people they are studying in the social studies core. They might be dyeing, cutting, stitching and decorating an Indian jacket, or pounding corn kernels into corn meal in preparation for an Indian feast. They might be painstakingly producing a page of calligraphy in the manner of the medieval monks, or creating a puppet for a play. The stretches of time devoted to working with one's hands provide opportunities for conversation and reflection about the unit theme, for a sense of identification with people of other times who engaged in the same kinds of activities, and for a sense of confidence and mastery.

The effect of this part of the curriculum is not at all hidden from the consciousness of the children. "What did you like about this year?" asked a third-grade teacher at the end of spring. A sampling from the compositions, unedited for creative spelling efforts, tells the tale:

.....I like studying the Indians because I like to know the way people lived, well, some time ago. It is amazing how they swrvie (survived) throwgh (through) all kinds of weather and crisises.....

.....Studying the Indians in third grade is really perfect because your not too old and your not too young. Third grade was my best year so far and it was the most interesting.....

.....I found out that the Indians don't say wa wa wa inless there having a feast and that is why I like to do and listin about the Indians.....

I liked the cookout because we got to do things by our selfs, and the same goes for the maiking of the Indian clothes, to the Indian reports. We were not treated like babys. I also liked the fair because it was very organized. We were also making the Indians happy. I liked studying the Indians because they lived without electricity and some of the things we have now.

I liked the Indian cookout the best this year because.....that day was the closest I ever got to being an Indian.....

I liked the cookout and the fair. And making the Iroquois village. and making my false face mask. And making the Indian clothes. And I liked Social Studies. And the Indian story. And doing the report. And I wish I can go through it again.

* * * * * * * *

"What stays with you from last year?" I queried a sixth-grader.

.....Finishing my banner, my coast of arms.....It was a big square of cloth and I put a shield on it.....with different colors..... and we'd look up and see what our names meant in Latin and we put our name on it.....It's hanging in my room.....I'll never forget the Medieval Fair.....we sold things.....we had a fortune-teller .....we had about seven different plays, original plays.....we had our own puppets.....I had a minstrel and he was alsc a king .....he was sort of versatile, I think that's the word.....Our play, St. George and the Dragon, we sort of revised it and made it a little funny.....

"If you had to tell someone why that was something that made you really feel good, could you tell why?"

Because all year I had been studying about medieval things, and I'd read about fairs, and all of a sudden here it was, and here was my banner and here was the play and here was my puppet..... And I think it was the last day of school and it was really a closing thing.....

The extensive use of carefully-selected historical fiction may well be the aspect of curriculum that has the greatest effect on the moral development of elementary school children. There might be many reasons for this. The similarities and differences between the life of the reader and the lives of the characters may stretch the capacity to imagine and respect alternate lifestyles. Such understanding is needed to motivate considerate behavior both on a conventional and principled level of moral reasoning.

Young readers seek in good historical fiction a male or female protagonist who faces not only the problems particular to the historical circumstances, but who also faces the same challenges young people have always faced. These are how to learn "who you are", how to cope with adversity and change, how to compensate for the hurt that grows out of indifference, prejudice and cruelty within the family, community or larger society, and how to assume responsibility for one's self as a learner and as an adult in the world of work. The very best examples of historical fiction for young readers manage to do not only all that, but to people their pages with individuals from whose interaction and relationships young people can get insights and perspectives into the world of adults, into the "darker side" of human nature and into the dreams that give direction and meaning to adult lives.

In every generation of young people there are boys and girls who gravitate toward such books. Ofttimes, however, this is a solitary activity; a private world discovered by the child or perhaps an inclination encouraged by parent, teacher or other sympathetic adult. In the typical elementary school classroom, such historical fiction enters the classroom only through occasional book reports. To gauge the influence of the consistent use of historical fiction as a component of the social studies core, one must examine school settings that encourage teachers at many or all grade levels to make such literature an integral part of the curriculum. The teachers who describe the school life of the third, fifth and sixth-graders consider historical fiction a powerful tool for instruction and have included descriptions of their favorite books in these pages.

Does increased capacity for perspective-taking and an increased capacity for identification and empathic response mean that moral development is taking place? Can curriculum, such as will be described in these pages, be called moral education? Can the effect of such curriculum be evaluated as we have learned to evaluate the effects of dilemma discussions? Bringing a representative sample of this elementary school curriculum to life in these pages is a first step toward the search for answers to these questions.

REMEMBER NOVEMBER 11 & 12, 1983 - NEXT CONFERENCE OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR MORAL EDUCATION - BOSTON, MA.

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PERSPECTIVES ON THE TEACHING OF ETHICS IN THE ETHICAL CULTURE SCHOOLS

by Howard B. Radest, Director

Before assuming the directorship of the Ethical Culture Schools three years ago, Dr. Radest was Professor of Philosophy at Ramapo College in New Jersey, serving part of that time as Director of the School of American Studies. He has been Executive Director of the American Ethical Union and is at present the Co-Chairman of the International Humanist and Ethical Union.

Fieldston Lower, Founded in 1933, is a superb example of good education and loving care for children. With its sister schools--Midtown and Fieldston--it is committed as well to working out the place of ethics in education. The Ethical Culture Schools, founded by Felix Adler in 1878 as The Workingman's School, embraced the same moral idealism which had given birth two years earlier to the Ethical Culture Society. By the mid 1890's "pay-pupils" were admitted and by the turn of the century a high school had been added. In 1928, the Fieldston School was opened. Today, more than 1500 students are enrolled in the three schools. As evidence of their continuity with the idealism of their origin, the Schools support the largest financial aid program of any independent day school in the country. Just as important is the continuity of their search for effective ethical education.

All good schools are concerned with the moral environment. This implicit curriculum appears in the school as a community, in the many relationships that develop among students, teachers and parents. A second element in ethical education however, and a distinctive concern of the Ethical Culture Schools, is deliberate and explicit attention to moral values. Teachers are encouraged to work on values and on ethical issues as part of their regular teaching in all areas of study. The third feature of this complex task of ethical education is "formal" ethics instruction itself.

As the teachers and staff illustrate in what follows, Fieldston Lower offers an integrated curriculum that is as attentive to "basic" skills as it is to developing a love of learning and a dedication to human values. Indeed, it is evident to us that ethical education can only be effective when students are secure about their abilities to understand and cope with their experience. Hence, the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, a knowledge of history, the arts, and the sciences, and the ability to think critically are necessary conditions of effective ethical education. At the same time, skill and knowledge would be inherently flawed without sensitivity to and literacy about moral values. Finally, applying moral values within the schools themselves--as in community service for example--is necessary if education is to come alive for our students. In short, we see ethics as inherent in good education and not as a separate and separable discipline.

Schools do not exist in a vacuum. The moral situation grows more difficult in the world around us as economic uncertainty and the threat of nuclear destruction invade our consciousness. The demands on schooling increase in complexity. Our task thus becomes both more urgent and more elusive. The schools mustbe responsive to new ideas and altered perspectives, even as they seek to preserve those things worth saving. So, as you will see in this issue, there is an interesting interplay between the conteporary, the historical and the perennial. For example, our third graders continue to study the American Indian as has been our tradition for many years, but now they also learn about Indians in an ecological context and take from that study insights about life style and community that illuminate their present experience. So too, ethical education needs to evolve as our experience generates changed or novel moral issues for us.

One of the special tasks and privileges of the Director of the Schools is to work with faculty, administrators and parents on the ethics program itself. Others will comment on the fascinating array of learning that constitute Fieldston Lower and to which I have only alluded. Let me add here some further thoughts on the ethics program and its development.

Curriculum for our elementary school students centers around a "core" of interrelated studies and concerns. This core is a social one. The rationale and teaching strategies for this approach to curriculum were described and implemented most extensively during what has become known as the "progressive education movement". In many school settings this progressive approach to education with its primary focus on a "core curriculum" has been diluted or superceded. In our school, however, we have preserved it and elaborated on it, because we see its social "core" as a primary means of focusing on ethics.

To be sure, we use many of the strategies of moral education that have come into being recently. So, a visitor will find us working with values clarification, discussing moral dilemmas and trying out philosophy for children. These strategies are most likely to be used in the weekly Ethics Period scheduled into our elementary school curriculum. If we have a really fine "core curriculum" do we need a separate Ethics class as well? We continue to schedule our Ethics classes; perhaps we do it as a tradition, perhaps we are "hedging our bets".

What is the rationale for a separate Ethics class? As I see it, there are five kinds of concurrent moral curricula that must concern us, and the "regular curriculum" deals only with the first four. I see these concurrent moral curricula as follows:

(1) The "hidden curriculum -- the implicit identifying values that are present in a society, that shape its members, and that are carried by the institutions of that society including its schools. It is this "hidden" curriculum that we think of when we say that values like fairness and truth-telling are "caught, not taught". Of course, the "hidden" curriculum is never perfectly hidden. It is revealed at

moments of conflict, of transition, in the presence of invention and innovation, or when cultures meet.

(2) The curriculum that is "hidden" for students but explicit for teachers and staff. Familiar, but sometimes not grasped as curricular, are school rules and their enforcement, and student government processes. Part of our task is to understand that these are curricular and not just managerial tools. Our students too, need to become more and more aware of this. But there remains a center of hidden-ness for students (and to some extent for us adults too) even in the best of these self conscious strategies. Students are not developmentally ready to understand all that is morally entailed in community and we might say then that many of the values of the second curriculum are "caught" from a student position and "taught" from a faculty position.

(3) The "explicit" curriculum that at the same time includes a "hidden" moral curriculum. In the teaching of mathematics, for example, good work habits contribute to virtues of reliability and responsibility. A stress on independent work reinforces the dictum against cheating; a stress on cooperation encourages helpfulness.

(4) The "explicit" curriculum that at the same time includes an "explicit" moral curriculum. In our schools we move as much of our curriculum as possible from the third to the fourth category. Examples might be stress on our responsibility to other people and other species in science studies, or deliberate focus on issues of duty and loyalty as influences on the life of the Pilgrims or the people in our Medieval Studies.

These four curricula teach moral (and other) values by focusing on applications, extentions to novel matters, and developing value priorities. They help us learn about the need for coherence in the presence of moral conflict, e.g. consistency in applying rules, due process and fairness, etc. The values themselves like cooperation or sharing are, by and large, taken as moral givens. As I see it that is insufficient and so the The Ethical Culture Schools are also trying to develop a "fifth curriculum" in their ethics program.

(5) In the fifth curriculum we are trying to develop the skills that enable us to articulate and criticize both the hidden and the explicit values already present in society and school. In short, the "fifth curriculum" pays special attention to moral history, moral reasoning, and moral argument. Its subject matter is the four curricula so to speak. Its task is legitimately philosophic: to help us think about moral thinking.

We invite the readers of this journal to join us in thinking about moral thinking in school. If you are far away write to us; if you come our way let us arrange for you to visit. We know that we are an unusual resource for the moral educator: a school with fifty years of sustained and explicit focus on ethics and moral development.

THE SOCIOMORAL CORE OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

by Peggy Cole-Farris, Principal

Peggy Cole Farris has been head of FLS for two years. For twelve years she was on the Graduate Faculty of the Bank Street College of Education, specializing in curriculum development through the social studies. Dr. Cole is Education Consultant for the Staten Island Children's Museum. In the mid-seventies she had a grant from the American Bar Association to study law-related education projects based on a Just Community; MEF readers with long memories may recall the article she co-authored in the Summer 1979 issue of this journal.

The Fieldston Lower School, together with the Midtown and Fieldston Schools were founded and sponsored by the Ethical Culture Society. The schools have a deep concern for ethical values. Felix Adler, founder of both the Society and the schools, wanted its graduates to be well educated, sensitive to moral values, and concerned with social issues. He knew that to accomplish these goals it would be necessary to help children become conscious of their own and other people's feelings and experiences. As a result ethics has been taught at all three schools as a separate subject since their founding in 1878. This issue of Moral Education Forum will not directly describe the ethics curriculum, rather, it will focus on how ethical issues permeate the whole curriculum of the Lower School.

Children enter the Lower School at the age of four and are graduated at the age of twelve. During this time, as Piaget and Kohlberg have documented, they move from a morality based on egocentric and single perspective considerations to a morality based on awareness of the rights of others and a need for reciprocity in human relations. We believe that the school experiences of children, where they spend most of their waking hours, are of great importance in making this transition. Two major aspects of school life are the interpersonal environment (the implicit curriculum), and the direct curriculum content (the explicit curriculum). At Fieldston Lower both aspects are given equal consideration.

As young children move from an egocentric perspective to one which includes the perspective of others, they receive messages from the school culture in which this transition occurs. We know from the work of modelling theorists, (Bandura et.al) that children imitate the behavior of adult role models in their environment. Therefore, one of our major concerns is with the way adults treat children. We know that young children will treat one another the way they are treated. If an environment stresses grades and competition, for example, young children will learn that getting ahead at the expense of others is important in life, that some are winners or losers, and that adults think those distinctions are important. If they live in a school environment which provides res-

ponsive non-judging adults they learn that each person's experience is important both to himself and to others, and that we have an obligation to hear each other well, to extend our understanding of a situation to include other people's views. In short... we model an interpersonal value system.

Carol Gilligan, discussing moral development, makes a distinction between the notions of caring and fairness. She suggests that moral judgment includes both aspects but that, for complex social reasons, women and girls are reared on a morality centered around care, while men and boys are reared on a morality centered on issues of fairness. The morality of caring focuses on nurturance, on the obligations of people to respond to the needs of others, which of course included the cognitive component of understanding what these needs are. The morality of fairness is more concerned with cerebral issues of equity, just distribution of resources, reasoning from a perspective that weighs issues intellectually and then applies principles of justice to conflict situations. What both these modes of morality have in common is a commitment to the needs and rights of our fellow human beings. At the higher stages of the Kohlbergian scale the absolute value of human life is paramount and, if one looks at a morality based on caring, those same elements are embedded in a caring stance. The meeting point of these two views is the focus of the Lower School. We want our children to show both an intellectual and a behavioral concern for others. To do this they must (a) be aware of the needs and views of others and (b) feel an obligation to respond to those needs and views. Psychoanalytic theory tells us that early experiences with nurturing provide the foundation for our adult ability to nurture; Erik Erikson's notion that adult care, born of trust in infancy, is prequisite to healthy ego development. Willard Gaylin, author of CARING sees this attribute as essential for the survival of the human species and, consequently, present in healthy human development.

If one accepts these ideas it follows that learning about caring in a school setting is supportive of ethical growth. At the Lower School we focus on caring in both interpersonal and curricular areas. Our techniques are designed around an understanding of child development which informs us that young children learn about their world through intense identification with the behaviors they observe. Through play they find it easy to identify with an angry tiger, a bold knight, a Woodland Indian child, an Eskimo catching fish for his hungry baby...to become another for a time in order to work out both the emotional and cognitive aspects of that experience. We use this developmental ability to identify with others throughout our curriculum to help children extend their understanding of the world.

WHAT WE CHOOSE TO STUDY AND WHY

The Curriculum is organized around themes in the social studies and natural sciences... the "core". Most of these themes last for a full school year beginning in second grade. However, even in the kindergarten and first grade we introduce long, in-depth studies lasting six weeks to six months. Why do we take an in-depth approach? Through in-

depth studies the imagination is captured, children become deeply involved. Their involvement mobilizes their energies and creates an esprit de corps, a common excitement which leads to cooperative activity and social integration. Schools are places involved with ego growth, helping children to develop feelings of self worth and confidence. One of the developmental issues all children face is the problem of their immature and dependent status in the world--they are smaller than adults, they know less than adults, they depend on adults. One way to look at development is as a journey from dependence to independence, from vulnerability to strength, from ignorance to knowledge. As our children gain knowledge about their world they gain a sense of intellectual power, they learn that there is a great deal to know about the world and that they can, even as children, partake in that knowledge. They learn that ideas are interesting, that information is accessible to children and that they can become experts through their studies.

When I first came to the Lower School, I was amazed to find six year old children capable of explaining the migratory, feeding, reproductive and coloration patterns of North American birds. I witnessed a full scale bird museum done by six year olds which included scenes from a variety of habitats, written reports on individual birds and guided tours given by first grade "experts".

Our children share their learning with one another, across grades. For example, our second graders visit the third grade to learn about Indian daily life through detailed diaramas prepared by the older group. This gives the older children a chance to share their knowledge with younger children, and it sets up an expectation in the younger children for an experience they will have the following year. Young children look ahead while many older children reminisce about the rich curriculum experiences they have had at the lower school. "What year can we make candy atoms?" the 8's ask the science teacher. (This is traditionally a 6th grade project.) Older children visiting the lower school will express great enthusiasm for an experience they had many years ago. We find it difficult to get children to part with their projects. They hold onto them well into adulthood because they have such deep meaning for their creators.

Our curriculum is deepened by our special subjects. All of the special teachers at the Lower School, (shop, music, science, library, art, or such as those teaching industrial arts,) find ways of enriching the core studies in their specific areas. We use an intensive "hands on" approach to our studies. Our young children use their bodies to "feel" the emergence of the Monarch from its chrysalis. Our 6 year old ornithologists make bird feeders in shop which will be used to nurture the winter aviary population which inhabits our grounds. In art our 3rd grade "native Americans" design and develop intricate seasonally accurate diaramas depicting Indian life as it must have been 400 years ago on and around the land accupied by our school campus. In industrial arts our fifth grade medievalists marbleize paper, design and stitch banners as part of a study of heraldry. Our sixth grade historians cut linoleum blocks and make samples of cloth using West African print and dyeing techniques to support their study of Ghanaian culture.

Our curriculum includes a wide range of experiences both within and outside the school, all designed to help children appreciate and identify with the peoples or living things they are studying.

We are a school given to trips. Our sixth graders, in a study of American history through immigration, face the question of the power of an idea. It is puzzling to children, and to many adults, how and why people will make enormous and sometimes ultimate sacrifices for their beliefs. We help our 12 year olds understand the power of an idea through a two day trip to Lancaster, Pa. where they can, by interacting with Amish people, see for themselves how a belief can generate and sustain a lifestyle. Our fifth graders visit a naturalist who raises Peregrine Falcons to better understand falconry in the middle ages. Our third graders visit the caves occupied by their Indian forefathers at a local park, while our younger children visit the Bronx Zoo to understand what animals do to adapt to winter conditions.

We are a school committed to understanding environmental issues. We want our children to understand and respect the balances in nature, to respond to the needs of living things, to support and consequently to value life. Our third graders become gardeners and our 5's and 6's become the caretakers of butterflies and birds. Each fourth grader adopts one tree on the campus and studies it throughout the school year, learning its seasonal cycle. They map the campus, label the trees, and plan a nature walk. We do this so our children will come to see themselves as part of and responsible for the natural world around them. Our curriculum takes note of seasonal changes because all living things, plants, animals, and humans are effected by their environment. In the fall an Indian garden, planted by last year's third graders, is harvested by our current third graders, and the children learn how the gift of the land yielded corn, beans, and squash to the Woodland Indians. In the spring our maple trees provide sap for sugaring while our eight and nine year olds repeat the same processes done by their Indian and colonial ancestors hundreds of years before.

We believe that it is important for students to value life and to do so they must understand the complex interdependency between the plant and animal world. We deliberately put young children into the position of observers and nurturers, because we want them to experience both awe and responsibility for living things. Every fall Kindergarten and first graders study the life cycle of Monarch butterflies. Teachers and children collect milkweed and caterpillars on field trips to New Jersey. They bring them back to the classroom where they set up conditions for the caterpillars to develop, through chrysallis, into Monarch butterflies. The children devote a great deal of time and energy to nurturing these insects through a major portion of the insect life cycle. They mix sugar water and hand feed the butterflies. They go into the cages where the butterflies are flying around. The children become attached to these beautiful insects, but at the same time come to realize that the butterflies have to be released so they can fly south for the winter.

Even our youngest children (4-5's, 5-6's) are concerned with the work people do and with the dignity of labor. In a one-month study of

the city and country our kindergarteners learn about farmers, shopkeepers, policemen, apple pickers. They identify with the people they are studying and in this way expand their understanding of human experience,

In the second grade children study what we know about prehistoric people. Our special subject teachers coordinate their lessons with these studies so that children can identify with the people they are studying through arts experiences, crafts and movement. By beginning with

IDENTIFICATION: CONTROLLED FANTASY AND ITS USE IN DEVELOPING ETHICAL CONCERNS

Many ethical ideas and behaviors are based on notions of justice. If justice is to be a governing principle of human behavior it must rest on the basis of caring for others. The Holocaust, a most dramatic example, was only possible because the Nazis, in committing genocide against the Jews, separated themselves from the people they were exterminating. If a Nazi soldier saw the Jewish children before him in the same way he saw his own children, he obviously couldn't go ahead with the execution. The ability to identify with other people and to therefore behave in a caring manner toward them is a cornerstone of ethical behavior.

At the Lower School we use identification as the major pedagogical technique. Teachers of young children ask many questions directed to this end. Why do you think he's angry with you? What do you think he is feeling right now? How do you feel when you are cold? How do you think the birds feel? What would it be like to live here 400 years ago with only the natural environment about you and to be hungry? How much skill and time does it take to tan a deer hide?

We use this technique throughout the school day. Our children cook the foods of the people they are studying. Third and fourth graders cut, stitch, dye and proudly wear the clothing of the Indians and the Pilgrims whom they are studying. Our fifth graders become "castle people" and share their newfound identities with each other and their families at a medieval festival. Everyone comes dressed in medieval clothing, indulgences are sold, a feast is consumed, the children perform a maypole dance, play recorder pieces and dance and sing as if they were residents of England in the Middle Ages.

At the sixth grade level opportunities for identification are both concrete and abstract. There continues to be role-taking, costume-making and play-acting. But identification for sixth graders comes to be more and more through the reading of fine literature. Making the imaginary real is supported by activities such as keeping journals in which they tell how they, as crew members on Columbus' ships felt when no land was reached and the sea was fraught with dangerous monsters. We expose sixth graders to historical fiction so they may come to comprehend the experiences of immigrants, slaves, dispersed families, farmers, laborers. We try to help sixth graders to bridge the gap from such literature to real life by setting up situations such as the opportunity to interview senior

citizens at a local home for the aged to find out what life was like for Eastern European immigrants who were wrenched away from the familiar to a new and unknown existence.

Ethical developmental concerns give our curriculum its shape, both in content and teaching methods. From time to time there are changes in the curriculum. In 1969 the 4th grade curriculum was The Vikings. With the onset of the civil rights movement the Lower School did a major curriculum revision so that the history of black people could be brought into the awareness of our students. This subject is presently taught in the 6th grade where we think students are sophisticated enough to deal with this content and to see its complexities without reducing these events to simple issues of heros and villains. Curriculum revision is done thoughtfully and carefully at the Lower School with the help of all the teachers and administration. While the core content is revised in response to perceived needs, we never lose the commitment to developing caring students.

The remainder of this issue will explain how the teachers see their role in this school and how they implement the goals I have described. Some of these articles talk to specific classroom practices, others to larger philosophical issues, some to both. We hope that you will come to better understand why we, at the Lower School, are so proud of the direction we have taken for the past fifty years. This birthday celebration is a time to step back and look at ourselves from a distance. The Lower School is a good place for those of us who know it well, for children to learn, for adults to work. We are proud of our school and pleased to share it with you through this issue of The Forum.

SUPPORTING SOCIALIZATION AND EGO DEVELOPMENT IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

by Meredith Mayer

Meredith Mayer is a graduate of Barnard College and Bank Street College of Education. She studied at the Arts Students League, is a printmaker and has been the Art Education specialist at FLS for fourteen years.

At one end of the spacious, pine-paneled diningroom a small group of adults sits around a trestle table lunching on macaroni and cheese. Their conversation is accompanied by a full orchestra of sound emanating from the six tables that fill the rest of the diningroom. The fifth and sixth grades, who are at lunch, are considered sufficiently mature to dine without adults at the table. However, inevitably, within the twenty-five minute lunch period a number of solo voices punctuate the peaceful murmers at the adult table.

"Nicky had thirds of macaroni, and there's no seconds for us."

"Alison and Susie say I can't be in the play."

"Peter mixed milk in his food, and it's so gross we can't sit next to him."

"Nancy is crying. I think it's because of what Jenny said to her."

Each interruption demands immediate response from one of the adults in charge. The response must be prompt, concise and in harmony with the spirit of the school. Equally important, the response must be limited, to encourage younsters to settle an ever-growing proportion of disagreements among themselves. Lunch for faculty at a separate table from fifth- and sixth-graders is not restful, but the separation is significant for the social development of children in the middle grades.

The lunch period is only one of many times in the school day when children and adults must find ways to interact that don't impede the process of social learning. Interpersonal relations are seldom amenable to direct control, and yet their quality is vital to the creation of a good learning environment. Conversely, a good learning environment helps create better relations among children; engrossing work makes for good spirits and overall harmony.

Any school, but particularly one which emphasizes physical mobility and independent learning, must take pupil interaction very much into account. At FLS, as in any school, there are basic rules (such as "no running in the halls"). In addition, different teachers institute individual rules that they feel strongly about. For example, one of my rules as art teacher is a rule to outlaw discussion of movies and TV because it is a distraction from the work at hand.

However, FLS teachers do a great deal more than uphold rules; they actively intervene both in the prevention of problems and the solution of problems. Beyond coping with the crisis of the moment, they are attempting to achieve long-range goals that are as important to the children's education as any academic subject.

There is general consensus that at the root of all matters bearing on conduct lies respect for the individual. This starts with respect for oneself and a sense of responsibility for one's actions. Out of this basic element in the personality comes respect for others. This is the foundation upon which the faculty builds in helping children to develop good relationships with their peers. Practical methods differ from teacher to teacher. In attempting to find a mainstream, I have questioned some of the school's master teachers of many years' experience.

Betty Lou English, teacher of the four/fives, the entering group in the school, feels that respect for both the physical selves and the creations of others is the primary social learning task for that age. From the beginning, she fosters the childrens' coping skills. When someone comes to her for support, her first question is "Did you ask him/her

(the transgressor) to stop?" Surprisingly often that simple solution works. When it does not and there is another appeal for help, Ms. English's next question is "What can you do to make him stop?"

Herein lies a vital element of the Lower School's approach to child behavior. As Florence Porter, who taught sixth grade in our school for many years, used to say: "This question forces the child to come to life; to become conscious." It is all too easy for the adult to enter the fray and settle things. To support the child's gradual mustering of coping skills is the harder route. Ms. English feels that whatever time this process takes away from other learning activity is well spent.

Of course the teacher's physical presence helps immeasurably, and Ms. English makes a point of standing next to the child who must cope with the transgressor. Once in a great while, she feels a physical response - a poke or a push - is appropriate. It can clear the air for the combatants. However, most disputes are settled by verbal interchange, abetted by clarifying questions and remarks from the teacher. Ms. English believes in using as few words as possible. A statement to the agressor, such as "I won't let you do that" seems to make sense, while avoiding the pointed finger of shame. You never leave a child with a feeling that he or she is bad, only that the behavior at that moment is inappropriate.

Stress is put on helping children to learn ways of dealing with their agressive impulses on their own. A chair next to the book corner is always available for any child who needs to get away from the group and cool off. In time, this option for cooling off becomes so internalized that many children head toward that chair automatically when they have acted intemperately.

Ms. English also finds that there are certain materials that are effective in defusing anger, especially the built-in anger that afflicts some members of every group. Clay, water play and the sand table all provide the sort of outlet that seems to calm and relax troubled children.

As children grow, relations grow more complex. While verbal abuse replaces physical confrontation, popularity and cliques can make for much pain, even among children of eight and nine years of age.

Veronica Ladenberg, third-grade teacher, says that much of her effort goes into helping children see that "Things don't just happen. Children's actions bring about consequences." To the aggrieved child her first question is likely to be "What is it that <u>you</u> did to bring on this situation?" After listening to both sides of an argument, she sometimes sends the two warring parties out to a bench in the hall to talk things out by themselves. This works if the basic relationship between the two children is sound.

What about perennial scapegoats? Ms. Ladenberg feels that much can be accomplished by a group discussion, sometimes held on an occasion when the victim is absent. Once such situation involved a new member of the group whose unconscious disruptive behavior had led again and again to conflict with his classmates. The teacher took advantage of his absence one day to initiate a discussion of the group's feelings about him.

After allowing the class to vent their feelings, she pointed out that the unpopular child was very young for the grade and as a newcomer had no idea what was expected. This probably led to his initial difficulties, and now he was locked into a very difficult position in the class. Seeing the child's behavior from this perspective freed the thinking of the children sufficiently to allow for less stereotyped expectations on their part.

In less extreme situations, teachers often help groups discuss their relations with a particular child face to face. Sometimes a child who is experiencing difficulties in meshing with the group feels more comfortable if the teacher talks about his or her behavior and then turns to the child with an "isn't that so?" giving that child a chance to express a point of view if he or she so chooses. Confronting a child with the behavior that irritates others and yet protecting him or her from being swamped by angry responses from classmates can be a very effective social strategy.

A different kind of problem is presented by the dependent child. Mildred Silfin, a third-grade teacher, finds that the surest way to help a child who is overly dependent on another child is to have a frank discussion with them. Both children need to know that in order to grow up and stand on their own feet they must learn to get along without each other at least some of the time. Desks are moved. Assignments to separate sections for art and shop are arranged. Other friendships are encouraged. Most crucial, when the staff plans how the children in the two classes on each grade level are to be realigned for the coming year, the social needs of the children are significant factors to be weighed.

Most children enter school with some notion of self worth and respect for others, and the school can build on this foundation. A few children, however, seem to start out with no "base" whatever; they seem empty of any sense of themselves. For these children, the school must seek to provide unusually close ties to one or more adults. A close and understanding relationship with even a single teacher may make the difference, allowing the child to develop a sense of him or herself, and in so doing begin to relate to peers in a coherent, feeling way.

As they enter the upper elementary grades, children also enter a new stage in their relations with adults. Because the group is increasingly important to each individual, the teacher must, more than ever, help children to make it function well. For Barbara Phenner, a fourth-grade teacher, this is "a constant, never-ending task." While small quarrels can be settled trhough a quiet airing of the disputants' views, there are times when she feels it best to address the entire group. "This situation makes me very angry. Do you know why?"

Answers often come slowly, but little by little the students uncover the basic sources of friction. "It is of utmost importance not to sweep anything under the rug" states Ms. Phenner. Thus, her nine- and ten-year-olds are helped to understand the dynamics beneath group disruptions and develop a more positive ethos for work and play.

By sixth grade, the group has become the dominant influence on the individual while adult authority figures have lost automatic acceptance.

For this reason, the role of the teacher must be a subtle one; while maintaining final control, he or she must enable the group to wield some real responsibility successfully.

A situation that requires great tact and support from the teacher is casting of the sixth grade play. Feelings run at fever pitch over which students are to gain the all-important male and female leads. All eyes are on the teacher to solve this explosive situation. Conceivably, a lottery or an election might be the answer; but neither would avoid resentment and bruised feelings.

Ms. Porter's solution is to engage everyone is a discussion of the parts to be cast. What sort of characters are they? What does it take to fill them? She might also remind the group that many a show has been stolen by the maid or the ingenue. By getting these pre-adolescents to focus on the play rather than themselves, she defuses the situation to the point where the youngsters can deal with their strong feelings and become ready to take on a responsibility which must be theirs.

Does graduation from the Lower School find the children able to bring to their personal relations enlightened understanding of their own behavior, coupled with comprehension of the rights and needs of others? How many adults can answer "yes" to that question with any consistency? It is a task for a lifetime. However, if any such wisdom in human dealings is ever to develop, the groundwork must be laid in childhood. For in the long run, it is not observing the rules which keeps people from colliding with each other, it is self-understanding and self-respect which lead to respect for one's fellow man.

THE SOCIOMORAL CORE OF THE SCIENCE PROGRAM

by Sally Aberth

Sally Aberth attended Cornell University and graduated from Boston University, majoring in English with a minor in Physiology. She has taught elementary science at FLS for five years. Mrs. Aberth is Chairman of the Committee of the Environment of the National Council of Women, and leads workshops for teachers in science education and environmental issues.

Elementary school science helps children to begin to make order out of the many individual objects and incidents in their experience. At the same time, paradoxically, it starts them along the intellectual path of wondering about new things and encountering new problems to solve. At each developmental level, moving from experiences with concrete objects toward abstract concepts, a good science program both organizes information already known and encourages the development of new ideas.

Three functions that science in our school fills particularly well are the following:

1. It encourages active problem solving and creative as well as logical thinking habits.

2. It provides occasions to think together about moral issues, such as respect for life and consideration of the future of Planet Earth, and

3. It is a discipline which not only takes place in the Science lab, but is an integral part of the lives of children, primarily through connections with the Social Studies core curriculum.

SCIENCE HELPS TO CREATE ACTIVE PROBLEM SOLVERS

"Sally, let's try and see if we can't weigh air", a sixth grader said to me. In a unit of reading, discussion and experiments on the nature of matter, sixth graders had learned that matter has two basic properties: it takes up space and it has weight. Now it is easy to do an experiment to prove that air takes up space and we had done it. It is not easy to do an experiment with elementary science equipment to show that air has weight, much less to measure it. However the idea had come from the children and they had thoughts about how we might go about it. We weighed an "empty" jar (filled with air), then displaced the air with water and weighed it again, then weighed the water alone. Results: inconclusive, our scale was not delicate enough.

Someone remembered that we had balloons in a cupboard and one student devised a balance using a meter stick. After balancing a balloon on each end, he blew up one balloon. Although the student experimenters did not know it, this is a method listed in books of experiments for teachers. This method failed because the pop of the balloon threw the whole system out of whack, but several students are still trying to refine variations on this method. Fooling around with the pump we had used to fill the balloon, a girl idly pushed the plunger down onto one side of the balance. The balance pan went down. "Hey, look, I've proven air has weight", she said excitedly. A heated discussion ensued. Was that weight, air pressure or force? What is air pressure? What is force?

At this writing the sixth grade believes that we cannot measure air due to the limitations of our equipment but that there is a way to show that it has weight; we just haven't thought of it yet. Parents, classroom teachers, friends are all being canvassed for ideas of how we might proceed. Children have had to think about displacement and buoyancy. We write up each try and, if it fails, document why. I am convinced that it is sometimes valuable for students and teacher alike to try something which might not work!

Science is a curriculum area where students can see the payoff in sticking with a task, in testing out a hypothesis, in being careful

and accurate in recording and observation. They can also learn that making mistakes is O.K. and learn the difference between the fear of failure and the delicious suspense of "Will it work this time?" Often, in fact, the process is much more satisfying than the product.

Too many children nowadays are passive television watchers or video game players. Anything we can do to encourage active, creative problem solving is important. A "hands-on" discovery science program does this for our children: they will go on to become skillful and innovative thinkers.

SCIENCE AND MORAL ISSUES

We raise mice in Fieldston Lower's Science lab. Litters are born often enough so that children can study genetic and behavioral relationships. In one school year from one breeding pair it is possible to have 80 or more young!

Last year, two weeks after giving birth the mother mouse died suddenly. The day after her death fourth graders gathered in science class to decide what to do with her body. Several children favored the classic pet burial, i.e. a pretty box and a stone grave marker. Then someone suggested that since the mouse had died, we use her body to study mouse bone structure. One girl objected: "It doesn't matter what you do with her body, but you have to give her soul four days to get to heaven." We discussed body-soul relationships for a few minutes. Then a boy declared, "Well, I don't believe in all this heaven stuff myself but if she does we should give it four days to get to heaven." Knowing this particular nine year old, I know that this was his way of saying: "I don't share your beliefs but I will stand up for your right to them."

Respect for one's self, for fellow students, respect for life, whether of a beloved pet or a "lowly" insect, moral concerns about the future, whether of our neighborhood or of our planet, are encouraged and developed in Science.

I had found it very difficult to communicate to a sixth grade class the concept of "Spaceship Earth"; the fact that we are all dependent on the balance of nature and on preserving our finite resources. We had discussed that plants give off oxygen which animals need and that animals exhale carbon dioxide necessary to plants. So I involved the children in the following activity: we took a small jar, filled it with pond water and placed in it one small snail and one small aquatic plant. Then we closed the jar. As I put the top on the jar I heard remarks such as "Oh, I get it", "Hey, that's like Spaceship Earth" and "Those stand for plants and animals on Earth". This model demonstrated an idea that had been difficult to grasp for some children when it was merely "explained".

If the balance was correct, both would live. If not. . . . Before we closed the jar we had to resolve the ethical dilemma (common at all levels of scientific activity) - was the possible sacrifice of the snail and plant worth the insights we might gain? Most children

were more concerned about the snail than the plant, and we discussed the possible reasons for this. The children decided to compromise by limiting the experiment to a week. It was their decision.

Our students interview parents about their feelings about the conservation of "Spaceship Earth" and plan activities that we can do to share our concerns with others. Some make posters, some write letters to congressmen and some talk with younger children about the issue.

One year a group of sixth graders became discouraged and entrenched in a conviction that they could do nothing as eleven year olds to affect the environment for the better. Rather than fight this attitude, which was stubbornly held, we organized it into a formal debate. 'Resolved: Elementary school children cannot make an appreciable difference in the environment.'

All sixth graders were involved in research to prepare for the debate, then it was presented as an assembly program to third, fourth and fifth graders. Three argue for the resolution and three against.

The debate never changed the minds of most of the sixth graders involved. However it deeply affected the younger children, who left the assembly bursting with ideas for environmental projects. One fourth grade, with their teacher's help, adopted a vest-pocket park adjacent to school, cleaned it up and planted flowers. Another class wrote letters, another cleaned up the litter around school.

Why should we not trash our environment with litter? Some groups have performed a simple and yet meaningful activity, called "Bury Your Lunch!" We take items such as a plastic baggie, a paper bag, an apple core, a juice can etc. and bury them in a trench one foot deep in rich soil. We make a careful diagram of what is where in the trench. Then three weeks later we dig the items up and note carefully what has decomposed and how much.

The difference between the condition of the paper bag and the plastic baggie is dramatic! These children will remember what "biodegradable" means, having experienced the phenomenon. Some complain to supermarkets which have switched to plastic bags instead of paper bags. The combination of discussion and discovery activities has produced budding conservationists.

In the Science curriculum there is no separate unit on the environment, rather topics grow out of content; energy problems are discussed in our unit on matter and energy, animal studies stress the importance to all species of interdependence, the issue of renewable vs. unrenewable resources is integral to our study of geology.

SCIENCE AND THE CORE CURRICULUM

Science at Fieldston Lower, for children in grades 3 through 6, takes place in the Science Lab, both in formal classes and in project

time, when the lab is available for independent study. However, the experience of "doing Science" is integrated into the school experience and is perceived as such by the child. This integration takes place most of all through strong and viable connections with the social studies core curriculum.

Third graders spend the year as Native Americans. In Science they plant corn, beans and squash together in mounds the way the Iriquois did. The children do all preparation of the soil, fertilizing, planting, weeding and watering. The next year's third grade Native Americans harvest the crop.

As the third graders plant the seeds and tenderly cover them with soil, they say a prayer to the Great Spirit for the plants to grow well. This is not a game; there is no giggling. It is role-playing in its best sense - for that moment those children become Native Americans close to the land and close to the Great Spirit. This is possible because of the entire year's core curriculum experience, stressing identification with the Native American point of view. Third graders harvest and dry fruits, they dig sassafras roots, and they study Northeastern Woodland animals and their adaptations to winter. Over and over in their writing and conversation, one sees that they feel close to nature, as the Indians did.

Fourth graders, in their explorer-Pilgrim study, learn mapping skills both in the Social Studies core of the classroom and in Science. While they are enlarging a map of the route of explorers and Pilgrims to the New World, learning about 2X and 4X scale, in Science lab they measure their own bodies carefully and create models of themselves to one-tenth X cale on centimeter graph paper..

Throughout the year, fourth graders do a tree study. Each child adopts a tree on the school grounds and writes about it monthly in a journal. Tree identification, observation and recording skills are honed. A tree expert visits and talks with the children about pollution problems which urban trees may develop. We talk about the ways the Pilgrims used trees and the different perspective <u>they</u> had on the renewability of this resource.

As woodworking projects begin in shop, the shop teacher explains the different uses of different types of wood to the children. In art children do water color paintings of their 'adopted' tree.

In fourth grade we also identify and define weeds -- or try to define them! Later in the year we research ways in which early settlers used weeds, as food, medicines and dyes. We make ink from black walnuts and children use it in the classroom with a quill pen. These activities, combined with reading and laboratory experiments about plant photosynthesis give children the following message loud and clear: "Science is not only a laboratory activity, it is a part of life, past and present.

Fifth graders are immersed in medieval studies. Many science activities connect naturally with this curriculum. In the classroom

children start the year by learning about the day-to-day activities of people in the Middle ages. How did they perceive time using sundials? What about a cloudy day? In the lab students work with pendulums recording the swings and noticing what causes variables in the rate of swing. At the same time, in shop, the children construct beautiful wooden sundials. Finally, fifth graders become inventors and, with funnels, tape and tubing build marvelous water clocks and timers of their own design. Wondrous though these inventions may be, they must be regular and tell time in some way. Most inventors manage to modify their schemes so that the clock/timers do tell time and satisfy their creative urge.

Customs are wonderful in a school. In our school, out of the fifth graders' wish to share their inventions, a custom has evolved of presenting an annual water clock show on the roof, to which the entire school is invited. Our youngest children marvel at the colored water going through the tubes, then children in the middle grades look forward eagerly to the time when they, as fifth graders, will be clock-makers, and sixth graders look back nostalgically at their water clock year. The experience of sharing and explaining what they have done is a wonderful ego-enhancing activity for the fifth graders; they share well.

In fifth grade astronomy, which is a study of the solar system, I am able to discuss the history of thought about the solar system in great depth with the children because their core curriculum has helped them to understand the influence of the Roman Catholic Church on medieval society. The children can comprehend and discuss why the Ptolemaic, earth centered theory of the solar system was so widely accepted for so long. Their models and mobiles of both Ptolemaic and Copernican solar systems constructed in lab pop up all over school, in classrooms, library, the principal's office.

In readings and discussion all year fifth grade classroom teachers have provided a rich background of knowledge about falconry in the Middle Ages. In April, after doing research reports on birds of prey in the Science lab fifth graders journey on a day trip to New Paltz, New York to visit Dr. Heinz Meng, a working falconer and a pioneer in restoration of the endangered peregrine falcon in the Eastern United States. It also pleases the children who were first graders in our school to recollect and build on their first grade bird study for awhile. Whenever possible, I try to take the children to visit involved scientists; scientists who are "doing science."

Dr. Meng flies his falcons to the lure for us and takes us on a tour of his mews, or hawk barns, where he is breeding and raising falcons in captivity to place back in the wild. However, as he points out to us, his efforts will be futile unless they are global; although DDT and other poisonous chemicals have been outlawed in the United States, peregrines migrate to Central and South America where these toxic chemicals are still prevalent and the birds may return sterile, if at all.

Thus, through laboratory activities, field trips and projects, and discussions which may (either) start in, or reach out to, the classroom, Science both enriches the core curriculum and is enriched by it. Students' growing realization that Science is indeed an important and integral part of life is reinforced.

Moral Education FORUM

A YEAR AS WOODLAND INDIANS: THE SOCIAL STUDIES CORE OF THE THIRD GRADE

by Veronica Ladenberg and Mildred Silfern

Having experienced a very formal European education, Veronica Ladenberg was attracted to the kind of teaching she saw at Fieldston Lower School on several visits. After attending Bank Street College and Columbia University, teaching at a Child Care Center and then teaching ten years at the Dalton School in New York, she finally "came home" to Fieldston Lower, where she has been for many years.

Mildred Silfern is a graduate of Hunter College and has been a member of the Riverdale Community for over thirty years. She has taught third grade and the American Indian curriculum at FLS for many years, and gets frequent visits from grown men and women who confess that they still cannot get themselves to throw out the hand-dyed, stiched and decorated Indian outfit they made when they were eight years old.

The roots of the third-grade study of the American Indian lie deep in the foundations of the Fieldston Lower School. It is an especially happy and eloquent affirmation of the philosophy of its founder, Felix Adler, that the mind and the hand should learn and work together to educate the growing child and quicken his spirit.

The third-graders "become Indians" at a time that is psychologically right for their stage of development. Boys and girls of this age identify readily with the courage and resourcefulness that characterize a primitive people's physical life and are receptive to the ways in which Indians expressed their beliefs through myths and rituals - an important experience, we feel, for space-age children, one that can help them become more firmly grounded as twentieth century citizens.

As far as we know, our core curriculum for the study of American Indians in the third grade is unique. It has never ceased to speak to this age level since its inception in circa 1939 when Marie Spottswood, then principal of the Lower School, laid its foundation with the help of her staff. Successful teaching strategies and activities have been developed, elaborated and sustained over time. We use and re-use historical and fictional accounts of Indian life that have been in our library for many years, as well as appropriate new material. A variety of traditional activities, such as field trips, planting and harvesting, winter and spring celebrations have evolved and become an integral part of our children's progress through the school.

Our Indian study is a study in depth. It has been the experience of past teachers that it is better to resist the temptation to "roam all over the U. S." to dip into the richness of diverse Indian cultures, and to concentrate instead on the Indians who lived close to where we live

THE AMERICAN INDIAN
MAJOR STUDY: GRADE 3
SOCIAL STUDIES
READING, FACT-FINDING; DISCUSSION; CLASS PROJECTS; WORD STUDY- ALGONQUIN, IROQUOIS; INDIAN GAMES; RESEARCH- WESTERN TRIBES
SCIENCE
ANIMAL TRACKING; STUDY OF TREES, ANIMALS, PLANTS IMPORTANT TO EASTERN WOODLAND INDIANS; PLANT INDIAN GARDEN
MATHEMATICS
EARLY WAYS OF MEASURING (VINE, ROD, LARGE ROCK); TELLING TIME
LANGUAGE ARTS
INDIAN WORD LIST TO READ AND SPELL; READ, DISCUSS, AND WRITE MYTHS, LEGENDS, POETRY, AND STORIES
CREATIVE ARTS
INDIAN SONGS, DANCES; MAKING IROQUOIS FALSE FACE MASKS; DIORAMAS OF INDIAN WOODLAND SCENES; MAKING KACHINA DOLLS
CULMINATING EVENTS
TAPPING MAPLE TREES FOR SAP AND BOILING TO MAKE SYRUP; INDIAN FEAST- FESTIVAL
FIELD TRIPS
TRIP TO INWOOD PARK, GREENBURGH NATURE CENTER; MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN; AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
INDUSTRIAL ARTS
SEWING, DYING, BEADING, AUTHENTIC INDIAN CLOTHING; MAKING PAPOOSES, LEATHER POUCHES, BEADED HEADBANDS; PROCESSING DEERSKIN INTO RAWHIDE; MAKING LEATHER MOCCASINS AND RATTLES; PREPARING INDIAN FEAST- CUTTING, DRYING, AND STRINGING OF FOOD
WOOD SHOP
MAKING CRADLE BOARDS; HAND DRILL; CANOES; HINGED WOODEN BOXES (TO HOLD ARTIFACTS)

1983, D.DIXLER

now. So we spend the better part of the school year on the Eastern Woodland Indians, and study the Algonquin tribes who lived in and around New York City. Only after this focus do we begin to introduce children to the more intricate culture of the Iroquois, who used to live to the north of us. Only in some years toward the end of spring do we end with a relatively brief exposure to the culture of the Plains Indian.

SCHOOL TRIPS: A PHYSICAL LINK TO THE PAST

A link with the past is readily established through forceful familiar landmarks - the mighty Hudson River, Inwood Park, and some great trees which are still standing on the school grounds. Certain animals are still inhabitants of our woods, as they were in Indian days. We can find plants, berries and roots which our third-graders can learn to recognize as an Indian child would. This is the "jumping off" point for the study. We focus on the familiar, but stretch our imagination back in time. What did Riverdale look like 350 years ago? Can you imagine forests and brooks everywhere, little bark wigwams in sheltered places, and a silent dugout canoe gliding down a sparkling Hudson River?

Although it sometimes poses a problem to take a trip so early in the school year, a morning spent in Inwood Park, on a glorious autumn day, stimulates this kind of imaginative thinking and is a marvelous adventure. There is still a sort of primordial quality about areas in this park, and it relates directly to the material of our first book about Indians, Little Fox, by Katherine Keeler. Walking through these woods, exploring the existing caves and finding "Little Fox's lookout" is the best way to start the identification process through which children of this age learn. We try to look at our surroundings through "Little Fox's" eyes.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: PLANTING AND HARVESTING

Each spring, the third grade plants the corn that next season's third-graders harvest in the fall. Corn is dried, separated from the cob, pounded bit by bit in a hollow log, and stored for the great feast that is an annual event each May.

Maple sugaring is another school tradition. Nights are cool; days are warm; there is a feeling of spring in the air and a sense of magic in the woodlands. Our native Americans know that the "sweet water" is rising in the sugar maple and that soon they will enjoy a treat that not only "tastes well on the tongue" but gives much-needed energy. The Fieldston Lower third grade "Indians" are most anxious to share in this special tradition, and so early in March you can see two stately maple trees, each with a metal bucket hanging on the trunk. The gleeful expressions of the children as they show their delight during the process more than makes up for the labors involved. "The sap is flowing; don't let any spill; it looks like water; how many gallons do we have; will we get syrup; I'd like candy; the room smells so good."

Since it takes approximately 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup (after many hours of cooking on an indoor stove), each child is delighted with even an ounce of syrup. Yes, from the drip, drip, drip

into the bucket to the thick sweet result is a very exceptional and beloved happening.

IDENTIFICATION THROUGH LITERATURE

Although all of our children can read for themselves, we read several books together in class so that they can become the focus of our discussion. In addition to Little Fox, we read Lightfoot, by Katherine B. Shippen, Squanto, Friend of the Pilgrims, by Claude Robert Bulla, and Indian Captive, by Lois Lenski. Each of the texts is considered historically correct, deals with real-life situations and does not oversimplify "good and evil". Each touches the hearts of children and adults and provides excellent jumping-off points for discussion. An extended set of quotes from the all-time favorite story of our eight-year-olds is Lois Lenski's Indian Captive. It is a children's version of an adult book, The Life of Mary Jemison, first published in 1824. Mary, or Molly as she was called, was kidnapped as a child and gradually campe to love her captors. When she was in her late teens, the English arranged to trade her for Indians that they had captured. The story poses Molly's dilemma with utmost simplicity and illustrates the power of this narrative.

> "But must I go?" demanded Molly. "Must I go away with the Englishman?"
>
> "Don't you want to go, then?" cried Beaver Girl, in astonishment. "Turkey Feather says that for many moons you have cried to go back to the pale-faces and it is right you should go....." (p. 261)

The Chief, whom Molly has learned to trust, further clarifies her alternatives:

> "My daughter, these are men of the same color as yourself, who speak the language you spoke in childhood. Soon a treaty will be signed which says you must go free. But you need not wait for that. Captain Morgan offers you a home and every comfort of the pale-faces, if you wish to go. (p. 264)
>
> "My daughter, for many moons you have lived with us. I call upon you to say if Red Bird has not been a mother to you; if she has not treated you as a mother would a daughter of her own? I call on you to say if Shining Star and Squirrel Woman have not treated you as sisters?"
>
> "Red Bird has been a mother to me," said Molly, in a low voice. "Shining Star and Squirrel Woman have been like my own sisters." (p. 265)

For several pages more, the Seneca Chief evokes the experiences of Molly's life with the tribe and the implications of her impending choice with great vividness. He ends by telling her:

> "Whatever you choose, no pale-face, no Seneca, shall change your decision. Now reflect upon it and take your choice and tell us. It shall be as you decide. I have spoken."

> The room was very still. It was still with all the silence of complete emptiness, as if no man breathed or moved or stirred. It was still with the siience of mingled hope and fear, for hope and fear, with desperate strength, struggled against each other in the breasts of the waiting Indians. (p. 266)

The Englishman's counsel is equally persuasive, but finally Molly must make her choice. She holds out her arms: "I cannot go!" she said, in a clear, steady voice. "I wish to stay. The Senecas are my people. I will live and die with the Senecas." (p. 269)

There is great rejoicing; and to reflect awareness of the difficulty of Molly's choice, her Indian name "Corn Tassel", which had been merely descriptive of her blond braids, is formally changed to "Little Woman of Great Courage".

WEARING THE CLOTHING OF THE INDIANS

Dyeing, cutting, stitching and decorating cloth replicas of the buckskins worn by the Indians is an absorbing and meaningful task for eight-year-olds. For both boys and girls it is usually the first major effort of this kind; the work progresses slowly over a period of many months. Because there is no time pressure, it is a soothing activity; an alternative to academic work, an accompaniment to story time. The Indian jackets become very precious to the children. It is not unusual for college students returning to visit the elementary school to tell that they still own the clothes they made in third grade.

THE GREAT COOKOUT

The Indian cookout is the culmination of almost a year's study and preparation. It takes place in May in a small woodsy area on our grounds, when the leaves are still a delicate green and the weather is often perfect. By now the children's Indian clothes are completed and the "Turtle and Owl Clans" are ready to celebrate!

It is an all-day affair. Fire preparation is carried out by the "men" of the clans, while the "women" cut the meat for the beef and venison stew, and cover the fish with wet clay. Dried beans and squash, the crab-apple pudding and chestnuts, corncakes, and "sumac-ade" have been readied during previous Industrial Arts periods.

While the stew is cooking over the fire and the fish in its clay covering is baking in the hot ashes, the children play Indian games which they have researched and practiced. When the main meal is ready and the feast begins, "Chief Black Bear" gathers his men around in a circle while the honored servant "Rising Sun" shows the women to their places behind them. A prayer is offered to the Great Spirit. Dancing follows. Then the women serve the men - as was the Woodland Indians' custom - clamshells full of steaming venison, beef stew, and succotash (before they eat themselves). For a while, silence reigns in our "woods". Third-grade Indians are tasting, gobbling up, or rejecting this unfamiliar food. Later the fish is pulled out of the ashes, and even the most convinced fish-haters cannot resist that delicacy!

After some quiet story-telling and more vigorous Indian games, it is time for clean-up. The day has given the children a real taste of a different way of life, with strange foods and exciting ways of cooking and eating. The day also held the challenge to stay in the Indian spirit and do without the familiar games and habits of everyday life. Usually, third-graders rise to this occasion beautifully; and the cookout becomes an unforgettable experience for them.

RESEARCH ON OTHER TRIBES

With the conclusion of the reading of Indian Captive, it is time to say goodbye to the Woodland Indians. A scant six weeks is generally left to make a nodding acquaintance with some of the interesting and more generally-known Indian cultures of the U. S. Although the time left to us for this job is short, we feel that the experience of learning about the Woodland cultures in depth has laid a solid foundation for new learning. That this hypothesis is true has been proven over the years by the children's reaction to the challenge of finding out, on their own, the most important things about a different culture. Armed with an outline made up by the whole group, they are now ready to find answers to their questions about other Indian tribes from pictures and books of their choice. Children work individually or in small groups and report their findings to the whole class.

This project serves another purpose as well. It releases the children from their identification with "our" Indians, which could be limiting. They realize how much there is to learn, and it stimulates them to ask many questions about the modern Indians - a subject which is difficult to approach while they are so identified with the Woodland Indians whose clothes they have sewed and are wearing and whose ways they know so well. We try to tread softly in approaching the said story of the first Americans' fate and pick out aspects that we hope children of this age can understand.

In our experience, children of this age react in two definite ways to emphasis on violence and evil. They either slough it off because it upsets them too much, or they develop a kind of morbid fascination, wanting to know every gory detail. However, we feel that eight-year-olds can understand that the White Man wanted the Indians' land - and took it. He won, because he had guns. (The stronger one wins.) They can understand that the White Man later made promises he did not keep. These are experiences children have had in their own lives; and if they can make the connection, it becomes felt learning and therefore real and meaningful. As children begin to understand the Indians' way of life, they gradually grasp the chasm between the White Man's feeling of ownership and the Indians' religious attitude towards the land the Great Spirit provided for his creatures. Western man's imposition of his religion on Indians can also be explained and understood through a common failing of most people - namely to impose their views and opinions on others. Whatever our beliefs and attitudes are, we tend to think that they are the right ones. The urge to be a "missionary" is strong in all of us if we have strong convictions about our values.

Keeping these points in mind, we can do a lot of honest teaching about the history of the American Indian and at the same time explore some very fundamental human issues that are not only pertinent to this topic, but encompass all encounters between social groups as well as relationships among individuals. Our goals and the scope of our activities are extensive. A school year spent as an American Indian is a deeply satisfying way to encompass them.

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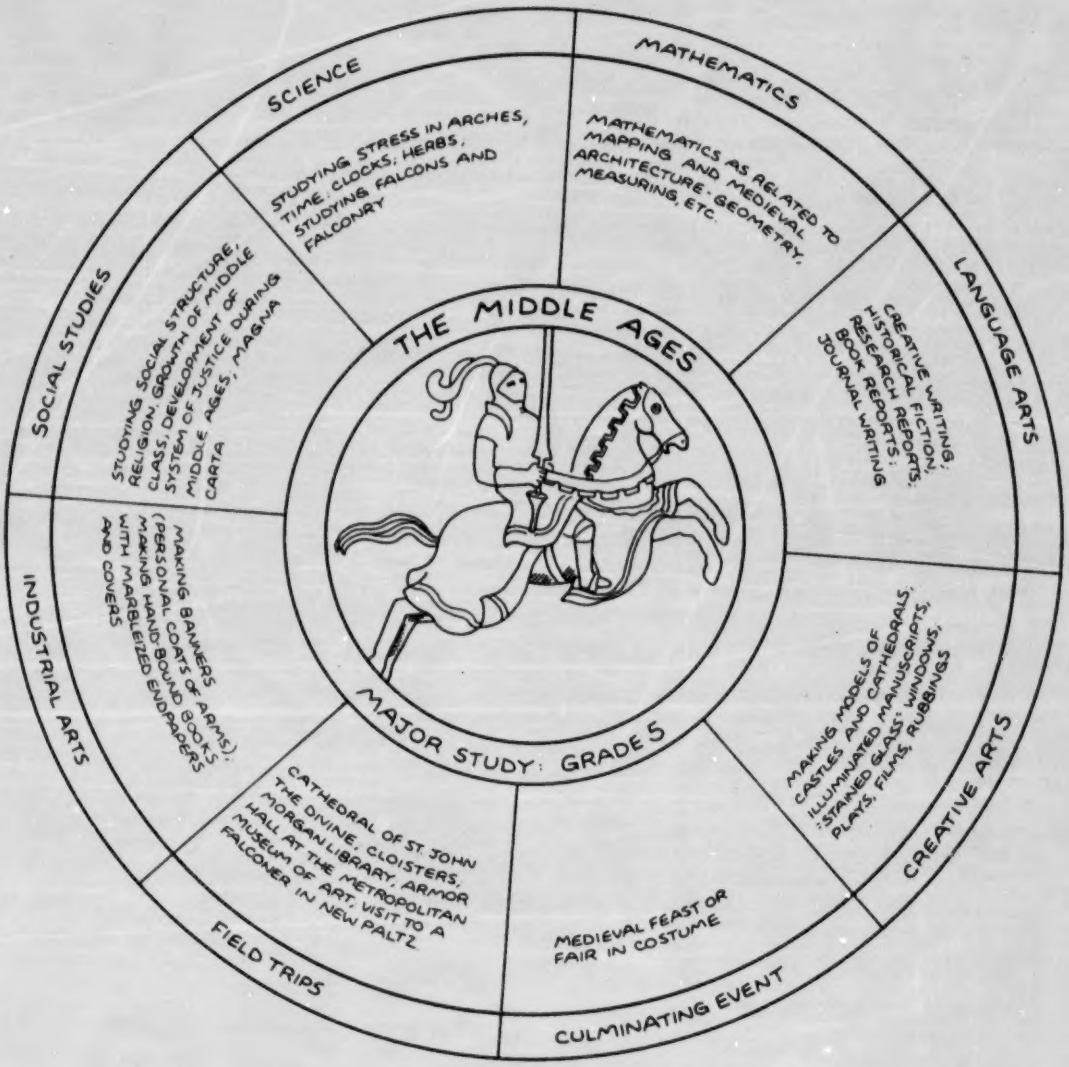
THE MIDDLE AGES: THE SOCIAL STUDIES CORE OF THE FIFTH GRADE

by Gloria Frey

From ballet as a first profession, Gloria Frey turned to teaching --swimming, dance, nursery school, ethics, and currently a fifth grade whose core curriculum is the Middle Ages. Educated in Toronto and at Columbia University, she has also lived in Paris and sampled a wide variety of cultures ranging from Stockholm to Casablanca.

"It's not fair!" is probably the most oft-heard cry of fifth graders. Their outrage is immediate and vehement. Can this intense concern for fairness be channeled into concern for justice? Conversely, can fairness and justice be better understood in the children's lives if they are also given an historical perspective? At Fieldston Lower we believe the social studies program contributes to the development of the children's moral awareness because it touches a responsive chord in their experience.


SCIENCE
MATHEMATICS
LANGUAGE ARTS
CREATIVE ARTS
CULMINATING EVENT
FIELD TRIPS
INDUSTRIAL ARTS
SOCIAL STUDIES
STUDYING STRESS IN ARCHES, TIME, CLOCKS; HERBS, STUDYING FALCONS AND FALCONRY
MATHEMATICS AS RELATED TO MAPPING AND MEDIEVAL ARCHITECTURE - GEOMETRY, MEASURING, ETC.
CREATIVE WRITING; HISTORICAL FICTION; RESEARCH REPORTS; BOOK REPORTS; JOURNAL WRITING
MAKING MODELS OF CASTLES AND CATHEDRALS; ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS; STAINED GLASS; WINDOWS; PLAYS, FILMS, RUBBINGS
MEDIEVAL FEAST OR FAIR IN COSTUME
CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE, CLOISTERS, MORGAN LIBRARY, ARMOR HALL AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, VISIT TO A FALCONER IN NEW PALTZ
MAKING BANNERS OF ARMS); (PERSONAL COATS MAKING HAND BOUND BOOKS WITH MARBLEIZED ENDPAPERS AND COVERS
STUDYING SOCIAL STRUCTURE; RELIGION; GROWTH OF CLASS; DEVELOPMENT OF SYSTEM OF JUSTICE DURING MIDDLE AGES; MAGNA CARTA
THE MIDDLE AGES
MAJOR STUDY: GRADE 5

1982, D. DIXLER

For a fifth-grader the study of the Middle Ages is ideal, for a 10-11 year-old's concerns are a microcosm of medieval themes:

-the struggle for power, yet need for protection (the social system of feudalism)

-the guidelines for permissible aggression (the rules of chivalry)

-the need for clear-cut standards of good and evil (the laws of the Church)

-and of course, the above-mentioned issue of fainess, whether it be individual or social.

To understand that justice is seldom a simple right or wrong issue, the children must realize that events are experienced differently depending on the viewpoint. For this awareness, historical events are studied from divergent viewpoints--not easy, since 10-11 year olds invariably want to know "what really happened"! Studying the Norman Conquest, for example, we examine the story pictured on the Bayeux Tapestry, but follow it with an excerpt from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, plus further accounts written by both Normans and Saxons.

How can we measure whether our fifth graders have integrated multiple perspectives about antagonists in history? It seemed to me that one sign of success surfaced in a recent incident where I had begun to arbitrarily assign students to membership on a "Norman" or a "Saxon" team. The alternative was not at a matter of indifference to the students. There was an immediate response:

--I want to be a Norman; they brought Chivalry.

--I don't like the Normans, they had no right to invade England! Let our team be the Saxons.

The more heated the argument became, the more heartening I found it because it meant that there were no "good guys" or "bad guys" that the class as a whole held as a stereotype. Seeing multiple perspectives, they were using the informal give and take of the classroom discussion to develop criteria for prioritzing historical data with a value dimension.

To generate excitement about moral questions raised by the study of history, we involve the children in projects. These projects are designed to help children empathize with, not just learn about, a particular group. For example, making a manuscript grows out of the study of monasteries. While it is easy to imagine the life of a page or a merchant's daughter, it is not easy to comprehend the life of a monk. In our age, which often celebrates quantity instead of quality, understanding the painstaking, unhurried work of a monk needs to be experienced to be understood. The classroom becomes a Scriptorium. Students look up examples of initial letters, Gothic alphabets, marginal decora-

tion and medieval whimsy. They master calligraphy and the use of gold leaf. Their manuscript leaves may have a few ink blots, but there is a great sense of achievement and appreciation of the artist-monk.

Another necessary ingredient for personalizing history is reading aloud fine historical fiction. The books chosen must accurately portray a period, present believable characters and interesting conflicts. While many children's books have been written about the Middle Ages, three fill these criteria particularly well. Rosemary Sutcliffe's Knight's Fee set against a background of Norman-Saxon relationships, deals with the conflict of loyalty versus ambition. Cythia Harnett's Caxton's Challenge interweaves many historical threads: the conflict between scribes and early printers (an echo of today's conflict between mechanized and hand work), the relationship between apprentice and master, the search for Malory's Morte d'Arthur manuscript, and the aftermath of the War of the Roses.

The book that makes the deepest impact is Barbara Leonie Picard's One is One. By the time this book is read aloud the class has been imbued with tales of chivalry, the study of knighthood and the nobility which was the ruling warrior class. The subliminal message to this point has been that might and right are practically synonymous. Without deflating the admiration for heroes, how can one show that war is not glorious, but ugly in any era?

The protagonist is a young noble brought up to regard knighthood as the only admirable life for a man. However, since as a baby he showed fear of dogs, he is considered a coward and therefore sent to become a monk. His prayers and thoughts center on escape from the monastery until he is sent to help the resident artist - a monk famed for his skill in painting manuscripts. Gradually the boy is drawn to the life of order and the beauty of art, until a visit from his mocking brothers shatters his new found peace and he flees the monastery. Ultimately he achieves his goal of knighthood, but experiencing the death of friends, the brutality of battle and the horrible aftermath of war, he is appalled by the destruction in the world. He chooses instead to create. He returns to the monastery not for religious reasons, but to become a creative artist.

Many themes can be drawn from the book. Physical and moral courage are contrasted. "Be brave enough to be different", the boy's friend and mentor tells him; this advice later gives him the courage to reject the life of a knight. On another occasion he is reassured, "Only the coward can be truly brave"--an epigram that challenges the accepted view of the warrior knight. From viewing medieval conflicts through the eyes of a protagonist, albeit in fiction, the children gain a deeper understanding of the moral choices involved.

Children's ability to comprehend the personal conflicts within the historical ones is shown in their creative writing. Assignments that require the student to take the role of a homesick novice monk, a rebellious page or a mischievous apprentice, help the child enter into the human conflicts of the medieval world.

Difficult abstract concepts such as law and justice are made concrete and comprehensible by student drawn comic strips that exemplify the problems. Taking their style from medieval block books, which presented complex events in simplified picture form the students draw their version of either the struggle which culminated in the Magna Carta, or the conflict between church and state which resulted in the murder of Thomas Becket. Dramatizing the events and putting them in a tangible form helps them grasp the underlying concepts.

Projects and stories are not mere embellishments to a curriculum, but an integral part of it. A study that does not involve the children personally and creatively stays an academic idea and is easily isolated or forgotten. But when the three elements fuse, the social studies acquire vitality and depth.

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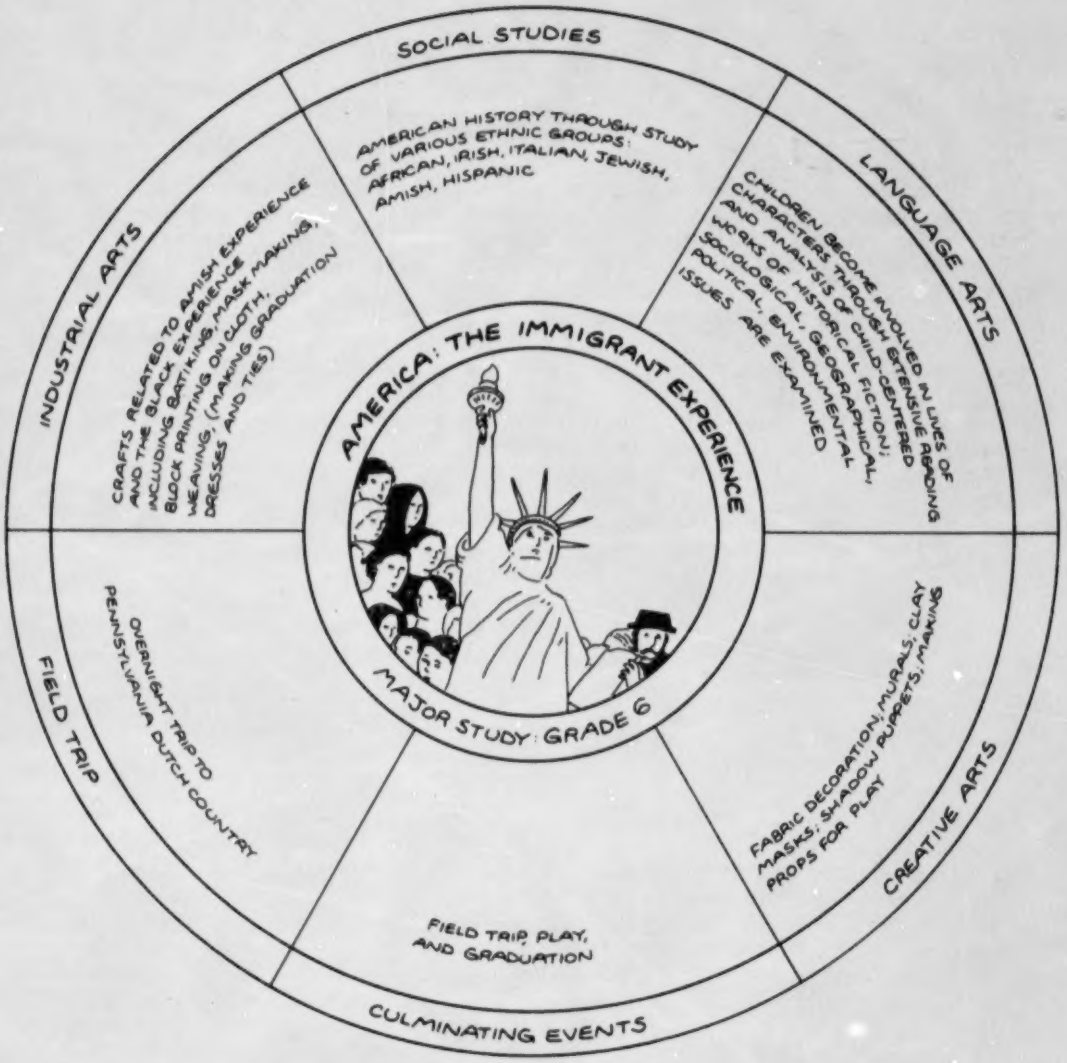
CHILDREN AS HISTORIANS

by Peter Sommer

Peter Sommer graduated from Hamilton College and then studied philosophy at Princeton University. He has been at Fieldston Lower School for five years. For three years he was the ethics teacher. To broaden his understanding of how children think and learn in the elementary school years he is currently a "regular" classroom teacher.

Children tend to divide time into two periods: B.B. (Before I was Born) and A.B. (After I was Born). Everything that has happened during the A.B. period is "real". It is hard for children, and for adults as well, to consider as reality anything that happened B.B.

How can people come to understand the past? How can teachers help students begin to develop ways of learning about the past? It seems to me that the teacher of history has a variety of strategies that - sequentially and in combination - can serve that purpose.


SOCIAL STUDIES
AMERICAN HISTORY THROUGH STUDY OF VARIOUS ETHNIC GROUPS: AFRICAN, IRISH, ITALIAN, JEWISH, AMISH, HISPANIC
LANGUAGE ARTS
CHILDREN BECOME INVOLVED IN LIVES OF CHARACTERS THROUGH EXTENSIVE READING AND ANALYSIS OF CHILD-CENTERED WORKS OF HISTORICAL FICTION; SOCIOLOGICAL, GEOGRAPHICAL, POLITICAL, ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES ARE EXAMINED
INDUSTRIAL ARTS
CRAFTS RELATED TO AMISH EXPERIENCE AND THE BLACK EXPERIENCE INCLUDING BATIKING, MASK MAKING, BLOCK PRINTING ON CLOTH, WEAVING, (MAKING GRADUATION DRESSES AND TIES)
AMERICA: THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE
MAJOR STUDY: GRADE 6
FIELD TRIP
OVERNIGHT TRIP TO PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH COUNTRY
CREATIVE ARTS
FABRIC DECORATION; MURALS; CLAY MASKS; SHADOW PUPPETS; MAKING PROPS FOR PLAY
CULMINATING EVENTS
FIELD TRIP, PLAY, AND GRADUATION

1982, D. DIXLER

WHAT IS HISTORY?

One of the first, if not the first historical concept that the social studies teacher can help young people to grasp is that information can be "true" without being "the truth". In my experience, I have found that most ten- and eleven-year-olds can begin to understand this basic and profound idea; and I make it an integral part of American history in my sixth grade at Fieldston Lower School.

I began this year by putting a time line on the board and asking what at first seemed like a very simple question: "When should a study of American history begin?" Answers varied: "Columbus," "Pilgrims," "Vikings," "Indians." We could not find a clear consensus. "How can this be?" I asked. "We're going to spend the year studying American history and we can't even agree on when it begins." We brought out five textbooks of American history. No luck: five books, four different beginnings. "Now what?" I asked. Silence. Finally, someone said, "You just have to make a choice." "Based on what?" I asked. "Should we draw lots, flip coins?" Silence.

When in doubt, ask more questions. What questions could we ask about the five different textbooks on our classroom shelves? Someone asked: "Why do they begin at different times?" Someone conjectured that it makes sense to begin with the Indians since they were here first. "Excellent," we replied. "But what about the books which don't begin with the Indians, or only when they met Columbus. Why did they choose not to?" Someone ventured the idea that maybe the author didn't think the Indians were important. "You mean in his opinion the Indians weren't important?" we asked. "But is history fact or opinions?" We then talked about the nature of this thing called history, and how it is not just a collection of facts but is very much influenced by opinions and assumptions; that depending on what source you read, you may very well get different impressions.

On another occasion, a lesson on the start of the American Revolution helped to clarify the importance of using different sources as well as asking the right questions. The class was given a series of readings consisting of primary and secondary sources concerning the question of "Who fired the first shot at the battle of Lexington?" The sources conflicted not only in terms of who fired the first shot, but in the number of casualties, and in the events before and after the battle. The students debated at length before reaching the conclusion that no conclusions could be reached. When we suggested that there was a definite conclusion, they assumed that we were holding back some piece of evidence that was not in their readings. To this we responded that a conclusion is not the same as an answer. We may not be able to answer with certainty the question of who fired the first shot, but we can conclude that it is not a good question. When order was restored (the students weren't yet used to questions without answers), we asked them if they could generate better questions. Who fired the first shot was a poor question not because it couldn't be definitely answered, but because even if it were, it wouldn't tell that much about what was really happening. As a follow-up to this and similar assignments, we

would sometimes have the children write questions based on what they have read.

Young people and adults can come to understand that what we know of history is selective and therefore partly subjective, and yet not feel a genuinely personal involvement and understanding of the past. Perhaps the most essential element of a curriculum which makes history both real as well as meaningful is the extensive use of appropriate literature; biographies, autobiographies, historical fiction, short stories. Literature personalizes history and makes it concrete. As the struggle and experiences of other people become internalized, literature seems, in the words of William James, to "extend the moral universe"; and this gives an enhanced intensity to class discussion which could not otherwise be achieved.

In selecting historical fiction for study and class discussion, I look for an interaction of several basic elements: (a) a precise description of the past -- but not to the point where it amounts to a mere reporting of facts; (b) an illustration of the human experience -- so the human motives and feelings are the result of a spontaneous reaction to and are reflections of the times, and serve as a point of reference, not as a subject portrayal; and (c) the life story of a hero or anti-hero that emerges without overshadowing the historical context of the story.

Alexander Dumas is reported to have said that "One can violate history if one has a child by her." True, we can be carried away by a vivid story; but few contemporary writers or literary critics of historical fiction would condone the standards of scholarship implied by such a statement. Certainly educators seeking vivid historical fiction need not compromise with historical accuracy. Any number of historical fiction writers, including Geoffrey Trease, Erik Haugaard, Claudia Von Cannon, and Gloria Skuzynski whose books are described in this article, have demonstrated convincingly that history has all the raw material the novelist needs.

The over-arching theme of the social studies core of our sixth grade is the experience of immigrants and minorities. Many of the books I shall describe in this article are part of the sixth grade curriculum. However, I shall also draw on examples from books that I used while I was the ethics teacher for grades two to six, prior to electing to become a classroom teacher at the sixth grade level.

IDENTIFYING WITH CHARACTERS IN HISTORICAL FICTION

Who am I? Who do I want to be? Barbara Picard's One Is One and Berniece Rabe's The Girl Who Had No Name are examples of books in which the characters struggle with human concerns as basic as these. In One is One, Stephen, the young protagonist, eventually learns to feel good about himself when he comes to understand the advice his friend and confidant, Sir Pagan, gave him:

> Listen to me, Stephen, this is important.....Do not let other people make your decisions for you. Live your life as you want to live it, not as others think you should. Be yourself; and whatever you want to do, do it with all your heart and soul..... Above all, always be yourself. Do not be afraid to do what you want to do, so long as it hurts no one else. We are each of us as God made us; and if God has seen fit to make you in an uncommon mold, be brave enough to be different. Promise me that, Stephen. (Picard, 1965, p. 169)

Girlie, the protagonist in The Girl Who Had No Name, lived in Missouri during the Depression. Stephen, the protagonist in One is One, lived in England in the fourteenth century. Both Girlie and Stephen are openly rejected by their fathers. Both manage to resolve their problems to a significant extent in different yet thoroughly convincing ways. Each one, in the end, finds satisfactory answers to the universal question of "Who am I?" Today's young readers find these two historical novels are thoroughly relevant reading fare, for they contain insights into aspects of the human condition, especially those pertaining to the image of self, which readers consider important. Yet in neither historical story is the life story and the individuality of the protagonist emphasized to the point that the historical reality in which she or he functioned is kept from coming to life. The reader realizes from each story the significance of the historical rituals and lifestyle that influence the characters' choices.

THE MERGING OF THE READER'S IMAGINATION WITH HISTORICAL REALITY

As readers identify with the characters, their imagination is stimulated and the historical past in which the action of the novel occurs becomes a vivid picture. This then makes the historical content become significant and relevant for them, and the stories become a fine vehicle for gathering a wide range of information. An example of historical fiction which stimulates the imagination is The Other Shore, by Lucinda Mays. This novel begins with young Gabriella deLuca's observations and impressions of the first five years of her life in the 1880's in Covello, Italy as she and her mother wait for her father to send them passage tickets so they can join him in America. The story moves through the early 1900's into her later childhood and adolescent years when she lives in Little Italy, an Italian ghetto in New York's Lower East Side. In this well-written novel the author offers solid psychological truth about human behavior, basic human needs and drives. The child or adult reader of The Other Shore can easily bridge the gaps in time, geography and lifestyles. The past is masterfully translated in terms conceivable for contemporary youth. One could never learn from factual books the lessons learned from this novel about the poverty, hunger, and degrading situations people like the heroine Gabriella deLuca, her family, friends, and acquaintances experienced in Italy or in the United States in this era. Nor could one learn from factual books the implications and impact that these people's unrelenting determination and persistent attitude of hope had for them, despite the tremendous hardships they experienced.

The Other Shore is peopled with characters one can visualize and almost "hear." They are people who really lived, worked, played, and suffered; people who got on with each other, annoyed each other and sometimes even hated one another. This author also helps the reader to understand and never forget why so many immigrants to the United States said with the same conviction as Gabriella's father, "You will find your streets of gold in school..... For immigrants such as we, they are nowhere else." Reading Gabriella's story, students gain an understanding of how the children of immigrants suffered unnecessary embarrassments and frustrations in school, learned all too quickly from their teachers to be ashamed of their heritage, their parents, and the way they lived. The novel offers a memorable and perceptive evocation of working conditions in the United States in the 1900's -- especially those in garment factories and in immigrant work gangs. The glimpse at aspects of the early phases of the labor movement in the United States is also a noteworthy benefit available to the young reader of this historical novel.

Well-written stories permit one to enter a historical world that is quite complete in itself. There is no need to fit students' reading into a chronological continuum. A moving and comprehensive story about a pre-literate people, the Cherokee people living in the sixteenth century, is created by the anthropologist Joyce Rockwood in To Spoil the Sun. Here the narrator tells her readers about a cycle of four evil omens that were witnessed by members of her Cherokee village, the People of the Seven Clans. Thereafter there unfolds Rain Dove's personal story, which spans two generations. Her story offers a three-dimensional view of the life of the Cherokee people and their traditions, their devastating persecutions by the invading Spaniards, and the almost total annihilation of the Cherokee people when they feel victims to a sweeping smallpox epidemic.

Another fine story about pre-literate people is found in the Batchelder Award-winning book translated by Maria Polushkin entitled An Old Tale Carved Out of Stone, written by A. Linevski, a noted Soviet archeologist. This fascinating psychological study is about a people living 4,000 years ago in Neolithic Siberia. The protagonist, Liok, is the seventh son of a woman who had no daughters. He wants to become a hunter; but when he is seventeen years old, he finds he must assume the role of the tribe's shaman. He has no idea of the secrets of the office and assumes the role reluctantly. He is resourceful, and for a time his tricks enable him to get by. Because he does not know many of the traditions of his people and actually chooses to go against the customs and superstitions of his tribe, tension grows between Liok and his people, and he must flee. Accompanied by one of his brothers, the two are adopted by another tribe. These people live a more rational and advanced way of life, but they too rebel when Liok breaks one of their valued traditions. This time his wife is sacrificed. Heartbroken Liok and his brother decide to go back to their own people, for the two young men want to share their newly-acquired knowledge with them. Also, they are convinced that they can persuade them of the value of relying on intelligence and ingenuity instead of traditions, superstition, and magic.

Another historical story that is especially worhty of note is The Obstinate Land by Harold Keith. In Keith's story, the Rombergs who are German immigrants make the Oklahoma land run of 1893, homesteading, setting doen roots, and farming the land.

VIEWING THE PAST THROUGH JOURNALS AND LETTERS

In their attempts to include significant historical content, a growing number of authors use diary entries or letters. The use of such literary devices makes it possible to reveal the characters' most intimate thoughts and feelings so that the reader can learn from the correspondents themselves what the motives, feelings, and prejudices were in the context of their own time. With this medium, authors can incorporate a wealth of details about aspects of history and human nature that they deem significant. Historical novels in which the authors use diary entries are The Death of Evening Star, by Leonard Everett Fisher, A Gathering of Days, A New England Girl's Journal 1830-32, by Joan Blos. In The Moonclock, Claudia Von Cannon uses letters as a literary device.

It is from the secret diary entries of Jeremiah Poole, the fourteen-year-old protagonist in The Death of Evening Star, that one can become immersed in the hazardous voyages of the world of whaling during the 1840's. Written in poetic prose and illustrated with beautifully executed black and white scratchboard paintings, The Death of Evening Star permits young readers to experience the fear, cruelty and sadness as well as the excitement of catching the whales. The book makes vivid the exhausting work involved in fighting the sea and the whales and in laboring to process the treasured sperm oil.

Also told through diary entries is the 1980 Newberry Medal book, A Gathering of Days, A New England Girl's Journal 1830-32, written by Joan Blos. Thirteen-year-old Catherine Hall records her impressions of what life is like on a New England farm. For the two years that her first and last entries span, the reader views from a child's perspective what it is like for one's widowed father to remarry, to have a new "mother" and brother brought into one's home, and to experience through death the loss of a best friend. Catherine also records her impressions on meeting with a runaway slave and her realization of the implications of the injustices that he and other black people suffered. She comments about everyday life activities like quilting, the challenges of learning how to knit, the "breaking out" after being snowbound, sugaring in spring and berrying in summer. This child's diary entries offer the young readers a low-keyed, insightful glimpse of a sturdy people, their pleasures and their hardships as well as their values and lifestyles.

INCORPORATING LEGENDS INTO HISTORICAL FICTION

Many legends are based on some actual incident or person, although these facts are not verifiable. The story about the Pied Piper is one such legend. In her novel What Happened in Hamelin?, Gloria Skuzynski pinpoints the date when the piper appeared in Hamelin (June 5, 1284) and

explains why and how he lured a throng of children out of Hamelin to the Calvary Mountain twenty-two days later on June 26, 1284. The novel is historically based and written as an unforgettable first-person narrative. There is little room for doubt about the basis of this legend when the reader is told details of how the piper fed the children rolls made from rye bread made with flour infected with a purple fungus rot, thus causing them to be unable to sleep, to be affected with violent spasms of cramps and burning sensations in their hands and feet. Since the afflicted appeared to want to dance and the activity and exercise did seem to alleviate their distress, the reader is told that their parents hired the Pied Piper to play music to ease their children's suffering. The author offers a wealth of historical details about the people and the government of Hamelin at this time and leaves her readers quite convinced they do indeed know the true story of what happened in Hamelin.

MAKING DEHUMANIZING EVENTS ACCESSIBLE TO READERS

It is not the province of literature, or any other art form for that matter, to solve persistent questions about the how and why of events like the Holocaust of the Jews in Europe in the 1930's and 1940's, death by burning of the political and religious martyrs in sixteenth century England, and two centuries of enslavement of black people in the United States in the 1700's and 1800's. The significance of historical fiction about these and other atrocities lies in its ability to evoke the atmosphere of those times while humanizing and personalizing the story through fictional characters.

Yoshiko Uchida has written two novels in which she gives a candid picture of a Japanese-American family's internment in a Utah camp during World War II. Both Journey to Topaz and the sequel, Journey Home, are poignant stories dramatizing how the family was stripped of its civil rights and lived through years of internment before their return to California. It is a true story, surprisingly told without bitterness. Children could compare the puzzling and frightening experiences of Yuki, Ms. Uchida's protagonist, with those that the internationally known Japanese-Canadian artist Shizuye Takashima recorded in her book entitled A Child In Prison Camp. This author, too, shows injustice, inhumanity and the irrationality of war from innocent children's viewpoints.

In most of the historical fiction for young readers about wars, especially that published during the 1960's and 1970's, the emphasis is that it is primarily the innocents who are victimized by any war. This is the theme in The Little Fishes by Erik Haugaard, The Upstairs Room by Johanna Reiss, Transport 741-R by Degens, and two recent war novels, On the Other Side of the Gate by Yuri Suhl and Mischling, Second Degree by Ilse Koehn.

On the Other Side of the Gate tells of the experiences of the Jews in occupied Poland during World War II. The story centers on a young Jewish couple confined to the town's ghetto, the secret birth of their son David, and their clever but risky scheme to smuggle the infant out of the ghetto in a barrel. It is not likely that any reader will ever forget

Yuri Suhl's description of how David is transferred from his bed to a barrel, given a light dose of chloroform to keep him asleep for an hour or so, carried outside the gate to the water pump where child and barrel were exchanged and carried away by a contact person from the Polish underground.

Ilse Koehn's story documents what happened to her as a consequence of having a Jewish paternal grandmother. She was therefore categorized as a "mischling " second degree, and her memoir tells of her experiences during the war years, first as a member of the Hitler Youth in Berlin, and later in various evacuation camps. Her descriptions detailing the Russian occupation of Berlin are haunting. The Russians filled the streets with tanks, cannons, horses, cars, infantry, and cavalry. Ilse and her grandmother hid in a cold and damp crawlspace under their house and behind their cellar, and later slipped through the empty pigsty attached to their house up to the hayloft above it, where they stayed four weeks, until the frenzied Russian military moved on to occupy other German cities.

None of these stories is pretty. All dramatize the staunchness of people when confronted by the dehumanizing experiences that come with war. All are fine stories in which the authors make excellent use of historical content to stimulate the historical imagination. These stories do not wrest secrets and intimate meanings from history; but they inoculate history "with a serum of invented insights which actually immunize the reader against mere factual truths and force him into a more painful confrontation about himself and his world that his serum sends coursing through his emotional and intellectual bloodstream" (Langer, 1975, p. 8).

INTERVIEWS: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN "HISTORY" AND EXPERIENCE

Interviews can only be a small part of learning about history, but the role of interviewing as an antidote to stereotyping is significant. The use of interviews with the residents of a nearby home for the aged in our sixth grade curriculum is such an example.

The experience of immigrants in the United States is a major theme for the year at Fieldston Lower, and the nearby Hebrew Home for the Aged in Riverdale gives our students an opportunity to learn from its residents what it has meant to be Jewish and to grow old in contemporary America. The children get some first-hand descriptions of progroms, culture shock, poverty and the Great Depression.

Prior to interviewing the residents, the children needed to learn about the types of questions an oral historian might ask, because most children are only familiar with the leading questions that television news reporters ask. It was necessary to present examples of open questions ("What do you think about modern music?") and closed questions ("Were you in the room when the police officer said that?") and the uses of both types of questions. Using the knowledge of outlining and the questioning techniques developed during the school year, a three-part interview outline was developed by the class: Life in the Old Country, the Journey Over, and Life in the United States. Within these three categories, children listed a total of sixty questions that could serve as guidelines to their interviews.

The children were afraid they would "freeze up" and wondered whether the elderly people would be able to understand them. To break the ice, we began by sitting together in a large circle with the residents to be interviewed. They had a barrage of questions to which our students made nervous reply. However, after the residents offered us home-baked cookies, everyone seemed comfortable enough to be paired for the interviews.

Back in the classroom, the children compared their preconceptions of the elderly with their new-found knowledge. Although all minority groups are victims of our society's propensity to stereotype, the immigrant elderly in particular have suffered from this traditional glossing over. Yet the resemblance of the residents the children interviewed to the prevailing stereotypes was faint. The residents were not ignorant -- they all knew several languages and were well-read, besides having learned well from experience. They were not weak -- they had lived through and triumphed over the traumas of immigration, culture shock, the Depression, the deaths (sometimes murders) of members of their families, poverty, anti-Semitism, and more. They were not passive. The veil with which our culture too often covers the daily affairs of the aged had been temporarily pulled aside by these children. They saw men and women who were thinking, reflecting, arguing, and, above all, articulating their long experience of living -- in splendidly rich language.

The children discussed what they had learned about Eastern European Jewish immigration which they had not found in their reading. They were quick to point out that their readings had not included information about Eastern European Jews who were not shtetl or ghetto poor, while most of the individuals they had just interviewed were children of scholars, shopkeepers, and tradesmen and often well integrated into the gentile community.

Each interview is a refutation of stereotypes which accompany every one of us through daily life. It is our hope that the children can use this experience as a springboard for insight into their own roots, and that their imagination will be awakened to the color and quality of lives which until now have been passed over. To these elderly immigrants, who have contributed so much to our lives, in some cases to our very survival, we owe a history of themselves, and, by implication, their generation. To ourselves, teachers and children, we owe a sense of pride in those who helped to make us what we are, the reconstruction of lives with which we should and must identify. We must be exposed to the vitality and energy of those

WHY STUDY HISTORY?

Our intention is not to train professional historians. Rather, it is to teach certain skills of formulating and asking questions, finding what's relevant and what's not, ordering information, writing clearly, reading different kinds of materials, reading beyond the story to more conceptual material, and doing research -- outlining, note-taking, finding information, and drawing conclusions. In employing these skills, the children discover that the course of history is not made up of random events bearing no relationship to each other. Each part of history is the effect of earlier events, and each occurrence will cause future events.

There are causes for things. There are similar processes at work in the present to what the children have studied occurring in the past. The children discover that history has an effect on the lives of individuals and, equally important, that individuals have an effect on the flow and direction of history. History is an ideal subject for 11- and 12-year-olds who are passing from concrete to abstract reasoning as it involves the fitting together of concrete pieces into meaningful abstract patterns. In addition, for early adolescents, who are beginning to question their own significance in a larger world, the examination of the lives of individuals who have influenced the world in which we live can be a stimulating and comforting task.

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